

To: R7 Daily Digest Group[R7_Daily_Digest_Group@epa.gov]
From: Washburn, Ben
Sent: Mon 1/5/2015 10:12:48 PM
Subject: OPA Daily Digest 1/5/15

OPA Daily Digest for 1/5/15

Congressional Inquiries:

None

State Government Inquiries:

None

Press Inquiries:

KWMU Public Radio, St. Louis – Veronique LaCapra – 1/5/15: Questions about the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

KZIM Radio (Cape Girardeau, Mo.) – Rick Lindsay – 1/5/15: Questions about the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

Environmental Stories:

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Health risks from West Lake Landfill still unclear - 1/3/15 -
Government regulators haven't clarified the situation much. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which oversees West Lake, admits it has to get better information about the radioactive waste to fully understand the risks. http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/health-risks-from-west-lake-landfill-still-unclear/article_23424c2c-9c0d-553f-84b0-33dd5e20623b.html

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Frustration with EPA handling of West Lake growing - 1/3/15 -

Except for an underground fire in an adjacent landfill, little has changed in the four decades since regulators realized radioactive waste was buried in a north St. Louis County dump.

http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/frustration-with-epa-handling-of-west-lake-growing/article_a8e499e6-f617-5956-a78b-cb2834b688ef.html

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - State regulators approve coal ash landfill in Franklin County -

1/2/15 - Ameren Missouri's proposed coal ash landfill along the banks of the Missouri River won a key nod from state regulators on Friday, clearing the way for a project that has faced constant pushback from environmentalists. http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/dnr-approves-ameren-coal-ash-landfill-in-franklin-county/article_12b09a72-c564-542e-8367-4e837f85f6eb.html

St. Louis Public Radio - State Approves New Coal Ash Landfill In Franklin County - 1/2/15 -

State regulators have given Ameren the go-ahead to build a new coal ash landfill next to its power plant in Franklin County. In its approval letter, the state agency said that Ameren's landfill plan met or exceeded all the requirements of the new federal coal ash rule — except one.

<http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/state-approves-new-coal-ash-landfill-franklin-county>

Columbia Missourian - State Issues Coal Ash Landfill Construction Permit - 1/2/15 - The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) issued Friday the construction permit for a controversial coal ash landfill planned for Labadie. "I think it's fantastic," Presiding County Commissioner John Griesheimer said. "I think it's long, long overdue, but I'm very, very happy that it's going to happen." http://www.emissourian.com/news/state/state-issues-coal-ash-landfill-construction-permit/article_ca7ff614-92cd-11e4-86d1-1f519d219d52.html

Associated Press - State regulators approve Ameren coal ash landfill – 1/2/15 - A proposed coal ash landfill in eastern Missouri has moved closer to construction despite the objections of environmentalists. Missouri Department of Natural Resources granted a crucial construction permit Friday for the 167-acre landfill, which would serve Ameren Missouri's Labadie power plant. <http://www.semissourian.com/story/2152938.html>

Joplin Globe - Safe Drinking Water Act has been cleaning up for 40 years - 1/2/15 - It's easy

to take the tap for granted. Turn a handle and water comes out. But, making sure that water is safe to drink is not as easy. http://www.joplinglobe.com/news/local_news/safe-drinking-water-act-has-been-cleaning-up-for-years/article_7b93e588-1587-50f3-810a-0722df4e5cbe.html

Des Moines Register - Sewage issues leaving Iowa's rural towns stranded - 1/3/15 - Multiple officials in a central Iowa town resigned amid a sewage dispute last fall — and experts say the costs tied to avoiding pollution from sewage in rural communities elsewhere in the state threaten consequences as serious as disincorporation.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2015/01/03/sewage-systems-rural-concerns/21238671/>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Associated Press - Small Iowa towns struggle to afford sewer upgrades - 1/4/14 - Many small Iowa towns are struggling to afford costly state-mandated upgrades to their sewage systems to limit pollution. http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/small-iowa-towns-struggle-to-afford-sewer-upgrades/article_35469984-b4d3-506a-a2e2-d59940ebdc6c.html

Kansas City Star - Water policy rises to new level in 2015 Kansas politics - 1/5/15 - Continued irrigation in western Kansas has led to declining water levels in the Ogallala Aquifer. Much of the state's attention in 2015 will focus on budget cuts and tax policy, of course. Schools and public employee pensions will be on the table. But the year is also expected to bring an intense, renewed focus on the state's most vital resource.

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/government-politics/article5413443.html>

Mason City Globe Gazette (Iowa) - Mitchell County farmers present Conservation in the Cab - 1/4/15 - Farming around waterways, practicing strip till and Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy were just some of the topics discussed as two Mitchell County farmers participated in the county's first Conservation in the Cab this fall. http://globegazette.com/news/local/mitchell-county-farmers-present-conservation-in-the-cab/article_7ae3e7d9-b2da-59a0-b87a-4e26d3caca52.html

Newton Daily News (Iowa) - ICG finalizes federal, state legislative priorities - 12/30/14 - The Iowa Corn Growers Association released last week its latest list of state and federal legislative priorities, based on input from its state members.

<http://www.newtondailynews.com/2014/12/30/icg-finalizes-federal-state-legislative-priorities/amwub3v/>

Topeka Capital-Journal (Kan.) - Earthquake monitors being installed in south-central Kansas | Monitors expected to measure magnitudes, locate epicenters - 1/4/15 - Kansas
Geological Survey officials say four temporary seismic monitoring stations have been installed in south-central Kansas to monitor increased earthquake activity in Harper, Sumner and Barber counties, and three more stations are expected to be deployed by the end of January.
<http://cjonline.com/news/2015-01-04/earthquake-monitors-being-installed-south-central-kansas>

Des Moines Register - How to battle exposure to radon - 1/4/15 - The first time Dr. Cynthia Wolff heard about radon was at the Iowa Cancer Summit more than two years ago. Shocked that she as a physician didn't know the gas can cause lung cancer and is found in high levels throughout Iowa, she felt a responsibility to share the information with her patients in Akron.
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/life/2015/01/05/doctors-raise-radon-awareness/21199825/>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Des Moines Register - Opinion: Co-ops balance goals of affordable, renewable power - 1/3/15 - Electric cooperatives have worked for more than 75 years because we can address the specific needs and goals of our local member-owners and communities. In his guest opinion, Cook highlighted several successful examples of how Iowa cooperatives are doing just that, but a one-size-fits-all approach to energy policy isn't the right path forward.
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2015/01/03/raccoon-valley-co-op-balance-energy-goals/21223713/>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Associated Press - Iowa agency abruptly fires leader of state energy office, stunning colleagues - 12/31/14 - A top expert on energy policy was abruptly fired from Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad's administration, stunning colleagues who call her a national leader in the field.
<http://news.yahoo.com/apnewsbreak-iowa-fires-key-energy-194525119.html>

Farm Journal (blog) - Waterway Woes - 1/3/15 - Icy conditions on the Mississippi River hold up barges in lockage as long as eight hours when regular conditions only take a couple hours. <http://www.agweb.com/farmjournal/article/waterway-woes-betsy-jibben/>

Farm Journal - Water Extremes Drive Tile Decisions - 1/3/15 - Soils receiving the greatest benefit from tiling are those with seasonal high water tables that are at or near ground level, Ferrie says. On the other hand, soils with lower water tables will likely not benefit and can even “go backward” with tile. <http://www.agweb.com/farmjournal/article/water-extremes-drive-tile-decisions-farm-journal-editors/>

Farm Journal - Water Management at the Forefront | New technology boosts irrigation accuracy and control - 13/15 - As irrigation systems crawl across farmland in 2015, farmers will be looking to technology to control and release water in the exact amount and at the exact time a crop needs it. <http://www.agweb.com/farmjournal/article/water-management-at-the-forefront-chris-bennett/>

AgWeb - Water Management at the Forefront - 1/5/14 - As irrigation systems crawl across farmland in 2015, farmers will be looking to technology to control and release water in the exact amount and at the exact time a crop needs it. In the mean time, irrigation companies are focusing on new technologies to avoid underwatering or overwatering a crop—the efficiency errors that grind against the bushels-per-acre bottom line. <http://www.agweb.com/article/water-management-at-the-forefront-chris-bennett/>

Spencer Daily Reporter (Iowa) - Radon awareness: EPA encourages home testing - 1/2/15 - During the month of January, which is National Radon Awareness Month, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends homeowners test their homes for radon. Radon is a radioactive gas that is cited as the second leading cause for lung cancer after smoking. <http://www.spencerdailyreporter.com/story/2152735.html>

Lincoln Journal-Star - Have your home tested for radon - 1/3/15 - Since January is Radon Awareness Month, it is a good time to have your home tested for radon or put a radon mitigation system in your home. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers and claims about 20,000 lives annually. http://journalstar.com/lifestyles/home-and-garden/have-your-home-tested-for-radon/article_54685784-e980-551a-90b8-2cb0d54ccf13.html

AgNewsWire - Ethanol Industry Outlook for 2015 - 1/5/15 - Unfinished business and much of the same old attacks on the RFS are likely to dominate 2015 for the ethanol industry, according to Renewable Fuels Association president and CEO Bob Dinneen who takes a look at what he expects to be some of the big issues for ethanol in the year ahead in this interview.

<http://agnewswire.com/2015/01/ethanol-industry-outlook-for-2015/>

Biofuels Digest - 2014 Iowa ethanol production peaks at 3.9 billion gallons - 1/5/15 - In Iowa, ethanol production totaled 3.9 billion gallons during 2014, up from 3.7 billion gallons the previous three years, according to Iowa Renewable Fuels Association (IRFA). Iowa continues to be the number one ethanol producing state, and is estimated to account for roughly 27 percent of national ethanol production in 2014. <http://www.biofuelsdigest.com/bdigest/2015/01/05/2014-iowa-ethanol-production-peaks-at-3-9-billion-gallons/>

NPR - Utilities Fight For Revenue Lost To Solar Power - 1/3/15 - Solar energy had a banner year in 2014, but as more U.S. households make their own electricity, they're paying electric utilities less. Utility companies across the nation are fighting back.

<http://www.npr.org/2015/01/03/374737086/utilities-fight-for-revenue-lost-to-solar-power>

NPR - A Young Generation Sees Greener Pastures In Agriculture - 1/3/15 - America's heartland is graying. The average age of a farmer in the U.S. is 58.3 — and that number has been steadily ticking upward for more than 30 years. Overall, fewer young people are choosing a life on the land. <http://www.npr.org/2015/01/03/374629580/a-young-generation-sees-greener-pastures-in-agriculture>

Wall Street Journal - Letter: EPA Has Followed the Law on the Clean Power Plan - 1/4/15 - Your proposal sets up a national framework that gives states the power to chart their own customized path to meet the carbon-dioxide-emissions targets proposed for each state.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-has-followed-the-law-on-the-clean-power-plan-letters-to-the-editor-1420408715>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Forbes - Americans Favor EPA Regulation Over Carbon Tax Or Cap And Trade - 1/1/15 - Americans want the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gases, preferring EPA regulation far more than a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade program, according to a Harvard political scientist who has conducted a comprehensive survey of attitudes toward energy and climate for the last 12 years. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffmcmahon/2015/01/01/americans-favor-epa-regulation-over-carbon-tax-or-cap-and-trade/>

Associated Press - New Senate chairmen aim to undo Obama's policies - 1/5/14 - Republican senators poised to lead major committees when the GOP takes charge are intent on pushing back many of President Barack Obama's policies, setting up potential showdowns over environmental rules, financial regulations and national security. <http://www.kansascity.com/news/government-politics/article5432922.html>

Washington Post - Opinion: Oil's swoon creates the opening for a carbon tax - 1/4/15 - The case for carbon taxes has long been compelling. With the recent steep fall in oil prices and associated declines in other energy prices, it has become overwhelming. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/oils-swoon-creates-the-opening-for-a-carbon-tax/2015/01/04/3db11a3a-928a-11e4-ba53-a477d66580ed_story.html

Huffington Post - Opinion: New Year, Old Challenges ... For Climate Change - 1/4/15 - Viewed from outer space, the ocean is the most evident feature of our planet and arguably poses the greatest threat to our daily life with its current trajectory. We ignore or neglect it at our own peril. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ghislaine-maxwell/new-year-old-challenges-f_b_6413706.html

Politico - Another year of executive action | Obama's plans will set up more confrontation with the GOP Congress - 1/5/15 - What do you do when you don't have Congress? Keep the regulations coming. The Obama administration is preparing another active year of executive action in 2015, pumping out new rules and enforcing others for the first time. <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/01/another-year-of-executive-action-113963.html>

Brownfield Ag News - Bayer on its "game changer" for soybeans - 1/5/15 - A new tool for soybean growers is described as a "game changer" by its maker. Bayer CropScience has introduced the ILeVO seed treatment to protect against two of the top diseases impacting soybean yields, cyst nematodes and Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS). <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2015/01/05/bayer-game-changer-soybeans/>

Greenwire - EPA rebuffs liberal legal icon's criticism of power plant plan - 1/5/15 - U.S.
EPA today struck back at Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe's criticism of the agency's landmark proposal to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.
<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060011097/>

Greenwire - EPA tentatively OKs biomass sorghum to be included in RFS - 1/5/15 - U.S.
EPA has given biofuels produced from biomass sorghum -- a high-yield type of grass -- a tentative green light to be included in the renewable fuel standard.
<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060011093/>

Greenwire - PJM seeks permission to postpone plant closures - 1/5/15 - Operators of the
nation's largest wholesale electricity market in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic want federal permission to keep a handful of power plants operating beyond their scheduled shutoff dates to offset a "historic" wave of plant retirements, severe weather and uncertainty around demand response. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060011098/>

Greenwire - EPA proposes to keep existing lead standard - 1/5/15 - U.S. EPA is proposing to retain the national air quality standard for lead after a review of scientific data on the public health effects tied to exposure. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060011084/>

ClimateWire - Texas, Calif. throw their weight around on power plant regulations - 1/5/15 -
The caricatures of the swaggering, independent Texan and the elitist, trend-setting Californian are on full display in the otherwise dry, technical comments the two major economic drivers submitted on U.S. EPA's Clean Power Plan.
<http://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060011064/>

ClimateWire - Powdery sponge holds carbon capture promise - 1/5/15 - Engineers from
Cornell University say they have invented a spongy powder that may be more effective at capturing carbon dioxide from fossil fuels than many other methods.
<http://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060011058/>

ClimateWire - Pope Francis to address climate change in 2015 encyclical - 1/5/15 - Pope Francis will use his global influence this year to aid the U.N. climate talks in December. The pontiff is expected to release a lengthy document later this year that will focus on climate change and human ecology. The encyclical will be distributed to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics by their bishops and priests. <http://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060011062/>

EnergyWire - Shaken more than 560 times, Okla. is top state for quakes in 2014 - 1/5/15 - Oklahoma had a fivefold surge in earthquakes last year, making it by far the most seismically active state in the Lower 48. <http://www.eenews.net/energywire/2015/01/05/stories/1060011066>

The Hill - GOP prepares Keystone blitz - 1/5/15 - Republicans are putting the Keystone XL pipeline at the top of the agenda as they seek to move a stack of legislation to President Obama's desk in 2015. Incoming Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has promised that a vote on approving the \$8 billion oil sands project would be his first order of business in the majority. <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/228407-gop-prepares-keystone-blitz>

The Hill - Feds set efficiency standards for light bulbs, ice-makers - 12/31/14 - The Energy Department set new efficiency standards for certain light bulbs and commercial ice-makers, which it said would save consumers and businesses billions of dollars. <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/228338-feds-set-efficiency-standards-for-light-bulbs-ice-makers>

Press Releases:

Link to all R7 press releases: <http://go.usa.gov/Qx5>

None

Fact Sheets:

Link to all R7 fact sheets: <http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets>

None

Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:

* New additions noted with an asterisk

1/7/15 – American Soybean Association Leadership College, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782

2/3/15 – Air and Waste Management Association – 23rd Annual Environmental Conference, Overland Park, Kan. Contact: Becky Weber, 7487

2/17/14 – Agriculture Future of America's On Tap Webinar Series, Regional Office. Contact: Katie Howard, 7861

DRA:

None

RA/Immediate Office

None

Other Events

AWMD

None

CNSL

None

ECO/EJ

None

ENSV

None

PLMG

None

RA/OPA

None

SUPR

None

WWPD

None

Wall Street Journal

Letter: EPA Has Followed the Law on the Clean Power Plan

Your proposal sets up a national framework that gives states the power to chart their own customized path to meet the carbon-dioxide-emissions targets proposed for each state.

Jan. 4, 2015 4:58 p.m. ET

In regard to Laurence H. Tribe's Dec. 23 op-ed "The Clean Power Plan Is Unconstitutional": When Prof. Tribe cites Justice Jackson as saying that "ours is a government of laws," he need look no further than the Environmental Protection Agency and our Clean Power Plan proposal for proof of that very American premise.

For more than 40 years, the EPA has established an enduring track record of faithfully following the laws enacted by Congress and the dictates of sound science to achieve the twin goals of protecting public health and the environment. Throughout, states have been critical partners in this success, reflecting both common sense and Congress's consistent decision to place cooperative federalism at the core of many environmental laws.

The proposed Clean Power Plan follows that same path to create a pragmatic approach to reducing greenhouse gases, in the form of carbon-dioxide emissions, from power plants. The Supreme Court confirmed that greenhouse gases are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act, and through a rigorous scientific process the EPA determined that they pose a danger to public health and the environment, a finding that triggered the agency's obligation under the Clean Air Act to apply the full range of flexible tools that Congress provided for doing so.

In developing its proposal, the EPA has conducted unprecedented outreach with states and as a result of what we learned, our proposal sets up a national framework that gives states the power

to chart their own customized path to meet the carbon-dioxide-emissions targets proposed for each state. Among the many approaches states can take, cutting energy waste and leveraging cleaner energy sources—which many states and utilities are already doing—can play leading roles in meeting the targets. By 2030 our proposal will result in 30% less carbon pollution from the power sector across the U.S. when compared with 2005 levels.

Avi Garbow

General Counsel

Environmental Protection Agency

Washington

Des Moines Register

Sewage issues leaving Iowa's rural towns stranded

8:16 p.m. CST January 3, 2015

Multiple officials in a central Iowa town resigned amid a sewage dispute last fall — and experts say the costs tied to avoiding pollution from sewage in rural communities elsewhere in the state threaten consequences as serious as disincorporation.

In Luther in Boone County, residents complained about a proposal for a \$1.4 million centralized plumbing system for the city of about 120. Some said upgrades at individual properties would be better than a costly citywide solution, and some also questioned test results and the seriousness of the pollution problem.

The acrimony grew so intense that by November, the mayor, a City Council member and the city

clerk had resigned.

These arguments have been playing out in Mount Union in southeastern Iowa, which is close to Luther's size, for over a decade. A major concern is that spending huge sums on sewer upgrades — and billing residents — could worsen population losses many small towns already are experiencing.

"In the state of Iowa, the majority of cities across the state are under 500," said Dustin Miller, director of government affairs for the Iowa League of Cities. "How do you engineer for population loss?"

Officials struggle to find solutions

Mount Union doesn't have a sewer system, so properties use individual septic tanks. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources notified the town 10 years ago that it had to update its sewage system to reduce pollution and the chance of infecting humans and livestock with fecal coliform, which had been discovered in a water test.

But about a third of residents have incomes below the poverty line, meaning that spending associated with a new sewage system to comply with the Clean Water Act could overburden residents.

"Right now, we're looking at filing bankruptcy and unincorporating the city because of the sewer. It has ruined it," said John Marek, mayor of Mount Union.

After the DNR told Rowan, a town of about 150 in Wright County in northern Iowa, to upgrade its sewage system, leaders proposed a cheaper lagoon system option, but they couldn't find a farmer willing to sell the land for the lagoon, and they did not want to use eminent domain, said Mayor Ron Bailey.

A more expensive centralized sewage system that takes less land would cost about \$1.4 million, but Bailey has reservations. A centralized sewage system could cost residents \$80 a month, not including the water bill.

"I'm afraid if we're going to be forced to put it in, in 10 years, we'll be bankrupt," Bailey said. "We have troubles getting people to pay their water bill, but if this comes in, people will either leave or abandon houses, and then you don't have the income."

And in the town of Alexander, also in northern Iowa, City Council member Jeanie Arends said the DNR has threatened to come into the town if changes aren't made to waste systems. But residents "just can't afford it," Arends said.

Miller, the Iowa League of Cities official, said that the town of Mount Sterling disincorporated for a variety of reasons, but a major issue was its outstanding debt on sewage.

"I don't think the general population grasps the provisions on those systems," he said.

Attention to farms is questioned

The DNR executes state and federal laws that protect air, land and water through technical assistance, permitting and compliance programs.

DNR spokesman Kevin Baskins said that he understands the predicament of some small towns — but there are complaints about the pollution from towns, he said.

"We get criticism the other way, too. If you have people that are downstream from places that septs are inadequate, they're telling the DNR: 'Why aren't you fixing this right now?' " Baskins said.

Miller said the issue is less about pollution, and more about the solutions proposed by engineering companies and the DNR.

Multiple mayors and council members said the regulations placed on the rural towns are unfair compared to the regulations placed on farms. For a 2012 water quality improvement plan, the DNR collaborated with the Iowa Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa State University Extension and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and more than 50 other stakeholders, but Marek, the Mount Union mayor, said that local representation was missing.

"Out of all those names, there's no towns, no mayors, no senators," Marek said.

Bailey, the Rowan mayor, said that significant pollution from hog confinements and other facilities seemed to get more leeway than tiny cities.

Mary Skopec, research geologist with the DNR, said it's important to remember that discharge of waste water into a body of water violates the federal Clean Water Act.

"We shouldn't pick or choose whether or not we're going to enforce the Clean Water Act," Skopec said.

High costs prompt population concerns

Some of Mount Union's issues involved Regional Utility Service Systems, a utility that has covered about 10 counties in the southeastern part of the state. Mayor Marek said the utility doesn't serve residents' best interests; utility officials didn't return messages.

"The engineering company, you're looking for money, here is a project," Marek said. "You can make \$200,000 right off the bat putting the system in, then use the contract to maintain and

operate the system afterwards. You're creating a system to support yourself, but put it on the taxpayers. So that's what's happening to our small cities."

Some residents in Richmond in southeast Iowa filed a class-action lawsuit against Regional Utility Service Systems in 2011, alleging that utility representatives changed the size and cost of projects without the consent of town officials and encouraged false reporting of household incomes to qualify for federal grants. Online court records show the lawsuit was dismissed in 2012 but could be filed again.

In the four years since Mount Union installed a centralized plumbing system, it has lost 40 percent of its population, Marek said.

"Having an \$80 sewer bill doesn't help trying to woo people," he said.

Now, Marek has been traveling across the state, warning towns about Mount Union's struggles, and the difficulties associated with an adequate wastewater treatment system.

While Luther has moved away from talks of installing a centralized sewage system, the DNR's pollution complaints remain. The cost of a private septic tank system can reach \$20,000.

"This whole process, I've been disappointed how some people have decided to go," said Tim Herrstrom, the City Council member and mayor pro tem who resigned last year. "It's a 'me-first' type thing. If you don't stay unified, and see the, I guess, the advantage of solving a problem and doing it with USDA funds, well, then I guess we've got a difference of opinion."

In Alexander, Arends said cities and farms are more likely to cause more pollution than a small town.

"The government needs to back down," Arends said. "It's true everyone needs to have safe water to drink, but if it's not broken, why do we have to fix it?"

Bailey, the Rowan mayor, said the stakes of finding a resolution for this issue are high.

"I'm afraid you're going to find a lot of small towns, and in 10 years they won't be towns anymore," Bailey said. "They'll go bankrupt and they won't be towns."

How water testing works

When the DNR tests water for contamination, experts look for *Escherichia coli*, better known as *E.coli*. *E.coli* is an indicator of a septic or waste source, said Mary Skopec, research geologist with the DNR. Fecal coliform bacteria lives in the guts of warm-blooded animals, and among those, there are different types of coliform that can cause diseases, such as salmonella. If *E.coli* is found in the water, it is a sign there is feces, and there is a high likelihood there are other pathogens in the water as well, Skopec said.

TIES TO HEALTH: "We find *E.coli* in 90 percent of the samples we take," Skopec said. "What's more difficult is to translate that to the health impact. There hasn't been a lot of tracking of that over the years, and it somewhat relies on people having an upset stomach and going to the doctor, and saying it's due to waterborne illness."

OTHER EFFECTS: Human waste also contains phosphorus, which can cause algae blooms. Chloride and salt is also produced from human waste, which can affect smaller bodies of water, Skopec said.

Addressing the problems

A variety of programs and pieces of legislation are in place to address the rural sewage situation. A law that went into effect in 2009 required every home and building with a septic tank system to have an inspection prior to the sale or deed transfer of the structure. Towns also seek loans or grants from the state and federal government.

ALTERNATIVES: Fixes have been proposed that would be cheaper than \$1 million-plus citywide sewage systems, but hurdles include attracting the interest of engineering companies and gaining DNR approval.

'INFORMATION GAP': "People coming out of ISU or Iowa have been trained in big technology solutions, and that there's this information gap on how to do this less expensively," said Mary Skopec, research geologist with the DNR. "Millions of dollars isn't something that they can be doing."

Des Moines Register

How to battle exposure to radon

Estela Villanueva-Whitman

Special to the Register

11:01 p.m. CST January 4, 2015

The first time Dr. Cynthia Wolff heard about radon was at the Iowa Cancer Summit more than two years ago. Shocked that she as a physician didn't know the gas can cause lung cancer and is found in high levels throughout Iowa, she felt a responsibility to share the information with her patients in Akron.

"I knew nothing about this and felt bad. Why didn't I know about this?" said Wolff, a family physician at the Akron/Mercy Medical Clinic.

She quickly formed a partnership with Dr. Barcey Levy, professor of family medicine and epidemiology at the University of Iowa and director of the Iowa Research Network. Levy was also at the summit and had mentioned radon in one of her presentations on risk factors in the environment.

Together, they conducted a study in the community of about 1,400 people in northwest Iowa. The results showed that 82 percent of homes tested were above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's action level of 4 picocuries per liter.

"That was surprising. This isn't really a new public health issue. I thought we'd find some elevated homes, but I was shocked that four out of five were above the EPA level," Levy said.

Researchers are preparing to publish results of the study, performed in 2013. They continue to receive test results from participants and give talks to those who request radon information.

In Iowa, an estimated 400 lung cancer deaths are caused by radon, a colorless gas that occurs naturally from radioactive decay of uranium. The gas can enter homes through cracks, around pipes or between the floor and wall joists in basements. When inhaled, it can damage lung tissue.

The U.S. surgeon general, EPA and American Lung Association recommend that all homes be tested for radon. Inexpensive test kits can be purchased at hardware stores. According to the EPA, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer and the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers.

Iowa has the highest average indoor radon concentrations in the nation – 8.5 pCi/L, or six times the national average. Experts say glaciers deposited rocks that were broken into such small pieces that it allowed for a large rock surface area for radon to be produced. An estimated 7 in 10 Iowa homes have levels higher than the EPA action level.

After learning of the dangers of radon at the cancer summit, Wolff tested her own home, which

had a level of 40. Her medical office, built six years prior, tested at a level of 26. She then encouraged the medical clinic's 20 staff members to test their homes.

"It turned out everyone in my office tested and every (home) was too high," she said.

"That really motivated everyone in my office to get behind this."

The issue also hit home because Wolff said she'd had patients die of lung cancer who were not smokers.

Wolff and Levy received a \$5,000 grant from the Iowa Cancer Consortium that allowed the clinic to offer free, three-day test kits for residents to place on the lowest level of homes. During the study period, the clinic handed out 746 kits, 397 of which were returned.

Wolff and her staff also hosted 14 educational forums, reaching 400 people in Woodbury and Plymouth counties. In her office waiting room and patient rooms, she continuously ran a video produced by the University of Iowa about radon and mitigation.

In addition to community groups, Wolff and her staff also gave presentations at Mercy Medical Center in Sioux City, where like Wolff, many physicians had not heard about the dangers of radon. The effort soon snowballed and the group became involved with the Iowa Radon Coalition as well as the American Cancer Society, travelling to Iowa's capitol to speak to legislators.

"Our community got behind it, which is what this was all along, was community engagement. We just wanted to get the word out. These are my patients, these are my friends, they need to know," she said.

Wolff also formed a local radon committee made up of city leaders, Realtors and bank representatives. Depending on the home, mitigation — sealing cracks and installing a fan to

prevent the gas from entering the home — can cost between \$800 and \$1,200. The bank offered low-interest loans to homeowners to encourage mitigation, and several contractors earned their mitigation certification to take on the projects.

Although the researchers have not done any follow-up to see which homes were mitigated, Wolff estimates a few hundred residents did so, based on the number of crews she saw working around town. All of her staff members mitigated their homes, she said.

The test kits were handed out anonymously, but Wolff said the team received a letter from one woman thanking them for their work, noting that she had her home mitigated after it tested at more than 100 pCi/L.

Wolff released her home's numbers to show that high levels can appear in any home. A lack of maintenance isn't the cause, and because there is no way to know about high levels, residents shouldn't feel guilty or ashamed.

"As soon as I knew, I started trying to do something about it," she said.

Levy developed a questionnaire asking about characteristics of a participant's home and said the only factor associated with higher levels was having a well-insulated home.

"Anyone can have a high radon level in their home. The only way to know is to test for it. You can't smell it, feel it. You don't know you're breathing it in," said Levy, who recently had a radon mitigation system installed in her own home.

However, she cautioned that no level of radon is "safe." Some lung cancers have occurred in patients at prolonged levels of 2 pCi/L.

While the Akron study serves as a snapshot of high levels in one corner of the state, Wolff and Levy noted that the work can be easily duplicated anywhere in Iowa.

"Communities want to get involved. Iowa's a good place to do that because communities really do get behind things like this to make their communities healthier," Wolff said.

Iowa Radon Resources

The EPA's map of radon zones: www.epa.gov/radon/zonemap.html

The University of Iowa: www.uihealthcare.org/radon

The American Lung Association: www.healthhouse.org/radon/ia_radon.cfm or 1-800-788-5864.

The Iowa Radon Hotline: 1-800-383-5992. Many counties sell or offer test kits.

Find a clickable map of the Iowa Department of Public Health's local Environmental Health Directory at www.idph.state.ia.us/webmap/default.asp?map=envhealth_resources .

Des Moines Register

Opinion: Co-ops balance goals of affordable, renewable power

By James Bagley

12:08 a.m. CST January 3, 2015

Being personally mentioned in John Cook's Iowa View ("Some Rural Co-ops Cling to Past on Energy," Dec. 30), I'd like to address the views and concerns represented.

Unfortunately, I must disagree with some statements in Cook's guest opinion and I need to set the record straight.

First, Cook wrote that "Raccoon Valley co-op's position on energy most certainly does not represent the best interests of the majority of its members." This statement contradicts the not-for-profit cooperative model. Electric co-ops like Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative represent the interests of the majority because they are democratically owned by the members they serve and are governed by member-owners who are elected to serve on the local board. Raccoon Valley exists solely to serve the local needs of our member-owners and the vast majority have told us time and again that they need affordable, reliable electricity above all else.

In fact, the state of Iowa voiced concerns about the affordability and reliability of electricity when the governor's office recently submitted comments on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed 111(d) regulations, which aim to regulate greenhouse gases from existing coal-fired plants. We echo the governor's concerns "that EPA consider the impacts of the rules on the reliability of the electric system and the cost to consumers." At Raccoon Valley, we have warned our member-owners about price increases that could result from EPA regulations on coal generation, but we won't know the actual cost impact until we are given the final regulations.

Cook also failed to include Raccoon Valley's efforts involving energy conservation and renewable energy.

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative is a member of Corn Belt Power Cooperative, a generation and transmission co-op based in Humboldt that is part of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative network, a regional grid of electric generating and transmission facilities that powers cooperatives in nine states. Basin is an international leader in efforts to generate cleaner energy from coal and gas while capturing and sequestering resulting carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, making pollution control investments of \$1.4 billion with annual expenses of \$153 million.

Like most generation utilities, Basin generates a majority of its electricity from coal, but Basin

has been investing heavily in wind. A recognized leader of wind energy in the upper Midwest, Basin has added 719 megawatts of wind energy to their portfolio in the past decade. That's enough wind energy to power more than 500,000 homes.

At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, we encourage our member-owners to use energy wisely by promoting rebates for lighting upgrades, appliances, HVAC systems, water heaters, insulation, weatherization and more. We also offer free home energy audits for member-owners to help them identify additional ways to save energy and money. From 2010-2012, our energy efficiency efforts saved nearly 100 million kilowatt-hours in lifetime savings. While it may not be as exciting as solar panels or wind turbines, we think using less energy is environmentally responsible, too.

Raccoon Valley installed its own wind generator in 2009 and has openly shared the results with interested members and with other energy providers. In fact, on the day of Cook's opinion piece, Raccoon Valley began accepting solar output from one of our member-owners.

Electric cooperatives have worked for more than 75 years because we can address the specific needs and goals of our local member-owners and communities. In his guest opinion, Cook highlighted several successful examples of how Iowa cooperatives are doing just that, but a one-size-fits-all approach to energy policy isn't the right path forward. We support an all-of-the-above energy policy that encourages a diverse energy supply in order to maintain affordable and reliable power for our member-owners.

JAMES BAGLEY is the chief executive officer of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative in Glidden. Contact: jimb@rvec.

Benjamin M. Washburn

Public Affairs Specialist

EPA Region 7

(913) 551-7364